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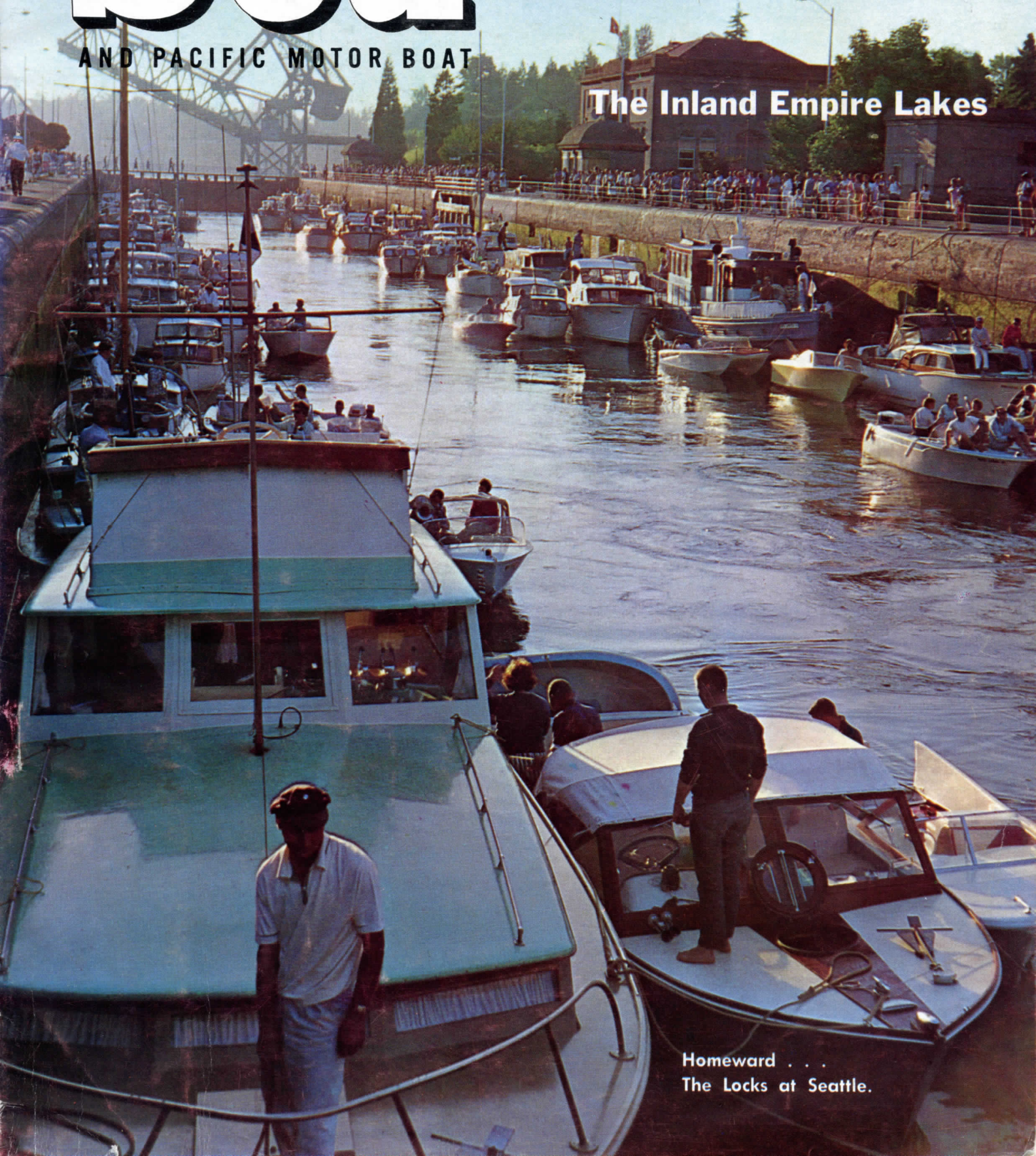
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John

Sea

AND PACIFIC MOTOR BOAT

**Islands:
The Challenge of the Channels**

The Inland Empire Lakes



Homeward . . .
The Locks at Seattle.

Scenic splendor rewards those who meet—



Prisoner's Bay is the heart of 21-mile-long Santa Cruz Island and the best place to begin your exploration of the Channel Islands. Special written permission must be obtained in order to go ashore anywhere on the island, however.

California's Cruising Challenge: The

Part I of a Series Anacapa and Santa Cruz

Story and photos by
JOANN ROE

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA yachtsman looking for "new frontiers" away from the weekly mainland-to-Catalina Island traffic jam often turns to the islands lying off Santa Barbara, which I call the northern Channel Islands. He turns to this challenging but rewarding and attractive cruising area sometimes with trepidation, for the waters are reputed to be tricky and dangerous. Tricky they are, but there is really very little danger for an informed yachtsman on a good boat. It is definitely worth the effort to be informed, for scenery and water conditions offer endless variety.

The northern Channel Islands are no place, however, to cut your offshore cruising teeth. They are situated in an often awesome and totally different type of ocean than the Catalina Channel habitue knows.

The chief reason for this difference is the proximity of the islands to Point Conception and Point Arguello, the place where the coastline turns roughly north-northwest after moving in a rather westerly direction for some distance. Here there is also a radical change in shoreline—from gently rising hills and coastal plains of Southern California to the extremely rugged, rock-strewn coastline of the area

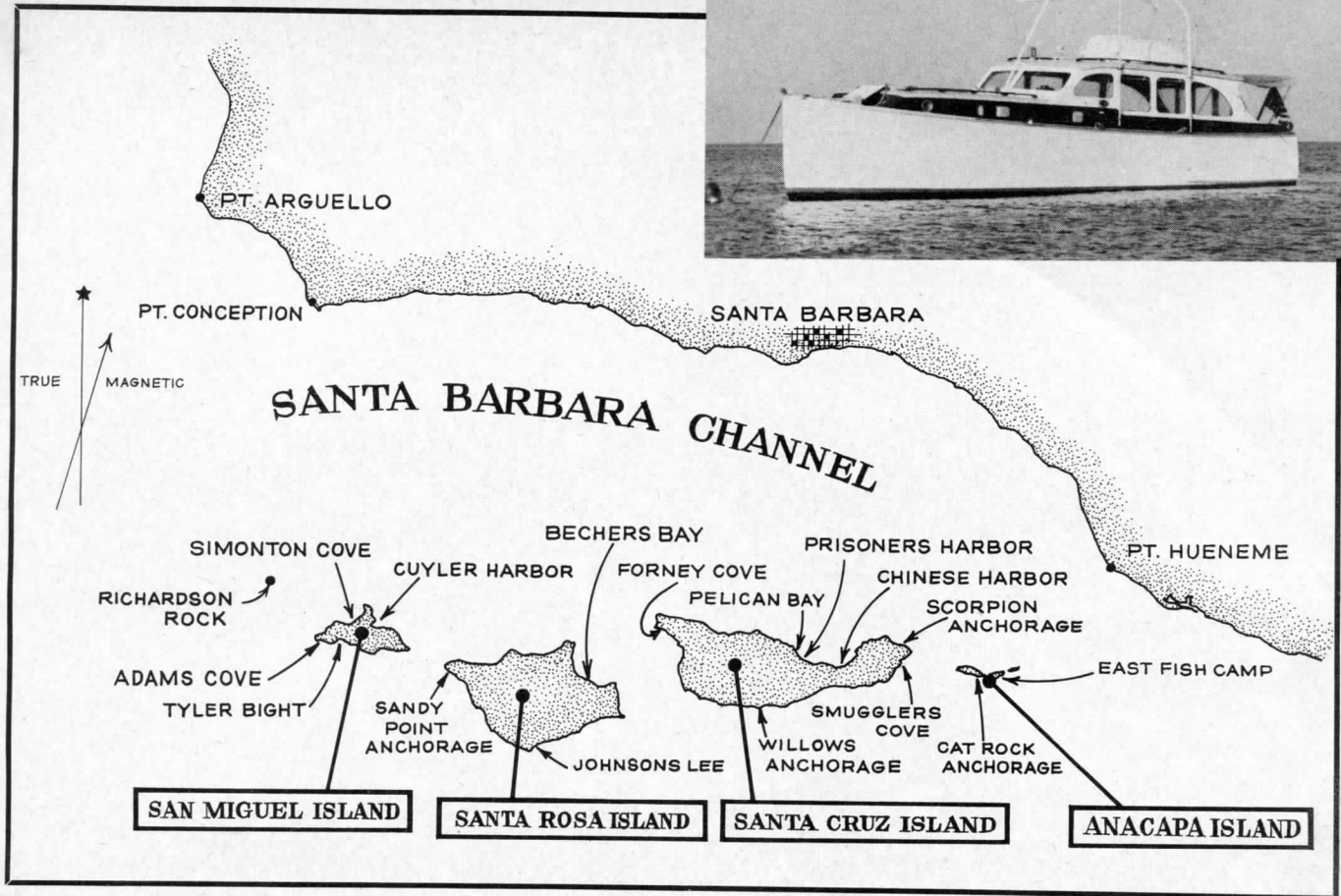
between Conception and San Francisco—offering some of the most spectacular scenery in the United States.

The rather abrupt turn of the shore, plus the existence of a sort of invisible dividing line between the northern and southern oceans at this area, causes a clash of currents and the birth of winds that regularly sweep around Point Conception and funnel down with enthusiasm into the narrow channels between the four northern islands, San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz and Anacapa.

The resultant wind-whipped chop and currents run obliquely into the swells approaching the Santa Barbara shore from a more or less southerly direction and cause unpatterned turbulence, especially when heavy swells oppose a strong northwesterly wind off the two points.

Typically, the early morning to noon hours are normally fairly calm; and leaving from Santa Barbara, Port Hueneme or even Paradise Cove, a small boat can easily make the initial run to shelter on the first of the islands, Anacapa, in a short time. Larger, slower cruisers and sailboats will want to be sure they have sufficient fuel and fresh water aboard before heading straight for the islands from San Diego, Balboa, Los Angeles, etc., as the only possible ports for refueling are Hueneme and Santa Barbara, the latter being somewhat out of the way for those island-bound. There are no ports on any of the islands where fresh water or supplies may be obtained.

Anacapa Island, 11 miles off the mainland, is a rock hogback of three barely connected islands, ranging from a few feet to one-half mile in width. While the island is now a national monument and accessible to the public,



Authoress JoAnn Roe and her family visit the Channel Islands (see chart above) as often as possible aboard their cruiser *Jolie*, shown in insert. The trip is not dangerous if one is well informed, careful and experienced.

Channel Islands

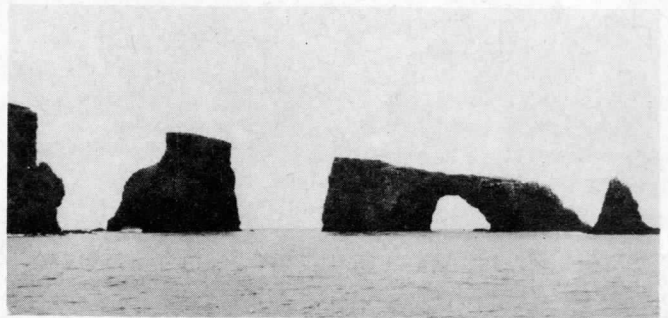
there is no cove or beach worthy of the name on the whole seven-mile length of this dinosaur-shaped wasteland. In fact, the neat Coast Guard settlement perched atop the eastern end of the island is supplied via a sturdy launch which must be picked out of the water and swung up onto a rocky harbor some 50 feet above the water!

A boat bound for Santa Cruz does well to cruise on the southerly side of Anacapa, for the island provides good protection from prevailing westerly winds for about seven miles, thus leaving only two or three miles of open channel to cross to the lee of Santa Cruz. If caught in a particularly rough sea in the afternoon westerly, East Fish Camp is a satisfactory spot to sit out the worst of the weather, and Cat Rock is a fair harbor in a northeaster. In calm weather, there is excellent fishing along Anacapa, particularly on the windward side near the east end.

Santa Cruz is the jewel of the Channel Islands, in the author's opinion, surpassing in beauty even enchanting Catalina. Perhaps the best place to start to explore the 21-mile long island is the heart of Santa Cruz at Prisoner's Bay on the northern side (Santa Cruz lies roughly east-west).

Prisoner's Harbor is so named because in 1830 Santa Barbara residents dumped a boatload of Mexican prisoners ashore at this point, hastily unloaded basic provisions and sailed back to the mainland. Without tools for boat building, the prisoners were stranded as surely as if they had been 200, instead of 20 miles from the mainland. Although Santa Cruz enjoys lush tropical growth in parts and has

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Fishing is excellent in calm weather near these unusual arches that loop out from the eastern tip of Anacapa Island.



Caire House, built nearly 100 years ago by Justinian Caire who originally settled Santa Cruz, still stands at Prisoner's Harbor.

CALIFORNIA'S CHANNEL ISLANDS

(Continued from page 23)

ample water and game, the prisoners grew restless and attempted to return to the mainland on rafts made of the hides of freshly killed animals bound around logs. Attracted by the still bloody hides, sharks apparently attacked the rafts and no trace of the prisoners was said to be found. (Other versions of the tale state that some of the Jaspers escaped to the coast and quietly rejoined civilization.)

Leading away from the pier at Prisoner's is a valley some seven miles in length and three or so in width, where Edwin A. Stanton's cattle headquarters are located. Those who have visited the valley describe it as an orderly oasis of vineyards, pastures, cattle pens, winding roads and ranch buildings—a valley not unlike the French Mediterranean in appearance.

Actually, it was originally settled by a French Mediterranean immigrant, Justinian Caire, who founded a settlement of about a hundred immigrants in 1869, establishing vineyards, stock-raising facilities and village buildings at Prisoner's Harbor, patterned after his native French town. Why the colony did not thrive and grow permanently is not clear; but by 1930 there were few of the colonists remaining. Descendants of Caire, the Gherini family of Oxnard and Santa Barbara, still retain a small segment of Santa Cruz near Smugglers Cove, but the bulk of the island is in the hands of Stanton.

The original Mediterranean-style home of Caire is still in good repair and also several other buildings at Prisoner's Harbor, and visitors holding proper shore permits are allowed to visit this historical site. However, it is important to note that non-permit holders are strictly forbidden to set foot anywhere on the island—an edict which is strictly enforced. In order to obtain such a written permit (which only allows access to limited areas on certain beaches), a prospective visitor must write in advance to the offices of Mr. Stanton in Los Angeles *each time* he plans to visit the island.

Incidentally, in accepting such a permit, the yachtsman more or less indemnifies the Stanton cattle concern for any damage he might cause, and also promises to report every boat from which he sees persons going ashore. As violators may be prosecuted by the district attorney's office, it is very wise to obey these regulations.

From Coche Point to Diablo Point, the wide sweep of Prisoner's Bay offers a number of excellent anchorages. Near the harbor one may anchor in a good sand bottom a few feet from the beach on a normal day, relatively safe from all but the northeasters. Moving northward, one enters Pelican Bay, a superb harbor that frequently is host to the Santa Barbara Yacht Club and other groups. The harbor is bounded by rocky shelves on all three sides, topped by trees and vegetation rising away from the water. It is a particularly popular harbor because there is virtually no surge and the holding bottom is good. Skin-divers will find the water clear, but little shell life.

A few thousand feet farther north is Twin Harbors, a small, fine harbor, especially East Twin. It is best for any fair-sized boat to place a bow and stern anchor, then secure a line to the cliff to prevent excessive swinging. In this way, two or three boats can safely lay in the narrow slot.

Northward again toward Diablo Point is Platt's Harbor which used to have excellent lobster fishing (crayfish), but there are few to be found now. Ted Conant, veteran of 50 years of cruising in the Channel Islands (and who furnished many of the pertinent anchoring tips for this article), states that he fished for lobster in Platt's in 1904. Between Platt's and Fry's Harbor (farther northward again), clearly visible from the water, is a charming dell filled with maidenhair

ferns and lacy trees almost tropical in appearance, and just around the next point is Fry's Harbor, another excellent anchorage with good holding bottom.

Beyond Fry's the sweep of Prisoner's Bay reaches its northernmost point at Diablo Point; and if any kind of a sea is running down Anacapa Passage, Diablo Point proves worthy of its name. Because the island makes an abrupt turn to the west, the surface of the sea changes quickly from the calm of Prisoner's Bay, and there is a vicious rip or current condition off Diablo that can quickly get a small (or even large) boat into trouble. Give Diablo a wide berth. If you are somewhat offshore, the worst of the shoreward turbulence is dissipated. Because of its proximity to Diablo Point, Diablo Anchorage is a dubious port in most weather, as it could be extremely difficult to vacate if wind directions change.

A short distance to the west of Diablo Point is one of the most charming small anchorages on Santa Cruz Island, Lady's Harbor, a deep indentation in tall, sheer cliffs ending in a pebbly beach. Entering the harbor, you see two apparently possible anchorages, but the cove to the port is not suitable for any but the smallest of boats, and then only with caution, for it is rocky. The starboard cove is a deep, snug, rockless haven. Again, put a beam line to the cliff to avoid excessive swinging; and because there is some surge, anchor with a fair amount of scope.

From Lady's Harbor to the turbulent west end is some of the finest ocean-mountain scenery in Southern California, with ramparts upon ramparts of virtually sheer cliffs falling to the sea. In spring some small waterfalls plunge over the cliffs and the steeply rising land above is clothed with vegetation.

From Lady's to Cueva Valdaze are some of the biggest Indian burial grounds on Santa Cruz, and the cliff tops are rich in "kitchen middens," where the Indians had their campfires and left shell remnants, fragments of cooking implements, etc. Archaeological parties from Santa Barbara Museum and others have made valuable finds in this area, but it is, of course, off limits to yachtsmen.

One of the chief attractions of Santa Cruz Island is near the west end, the Painted Cave, said to be more impressive than the Grotto in Capri. To enter the cave safely one must wait for a truly calm day. (Usually the sea rolls heavily down past the entrance.) The usual procedure is to anchor just outside the entrance or even in the arch in your large boat, then enter the cave in a smaller launch.

The entrance, which is about 50 feet wide and 200 feet high, narrows down to 15 feet or so with a 10-foot ceiling when one gets into the cave about 300 feet. Magnesium flares are necessary here, as it is pitch black. After passing beyond the narrow portion, the cave opens up somewhat into an inner cavern where sea lions make their home. The sea lions, resenting the intrusion of visitors, often make a rush for the exit. It is a little disconcerting to be surrounded by their out-rushing, snorting bodies in the semi-darkness! Remember to enter the cave only when surge is light because of the 10-foot ceiling at the point mentioned.

All the anchorages mentioned above are unsafe in a northerly or northeasterly blow; and some of them are quite nasty to leave in a rough sea, with large waves across their entrances. In such "wrong-way" winds the only really safe harbor on the northern side of Santa Cruz is Chinese Harbor, tucked neatly behind Coche Point.

Part II, next month, will continue the tour around Santa Cruz, along the northeast end to Scorpion and down to the quiet south side cruising waters, stopping at the various good anchorages. Then we hop over to Santa Rosa Island with its many anchorages and colorful history and on to San Miguel, most northerly of the Channel Islands.